

Patient Satisfaction with a Web-Based Patient-Provider Messaging System Implemented Across a Statewide Delivery System (Group Health Cooperative)

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Abstract

Since 1999, Group Health Cooperative has been developing and implementing Web services to improve patient access to health care. Among these services are a patient-provider secure messaging system and online pharmacy refills. A survey of patients using these services demonstrated the value of these tools in enhancing the patients' ability to manage their health care and the positive effects it could have on member retention.

Background

Beginning in 1999, Group Health Cooperative, the nation's second largest consumer governed health system, undertook the development of Web services that provided patient-centered care at the right place and the right time. The Cooperative sought to increase access to health care services, convenience, and retention of members. It also wanted to transform the role of patients to become part of the health care team, empowered and activated to manage their own health care.

Group Health Cooperative has successfully implemented a patient-provider secure messaging system across the State of Washington and northern Idaho through its "MyGroupHealth (www.ghc.org)" patient portal. The poster will illustrate the system in use and the business processes designed to support the "right care at the right time" using the Web for 100% of the Group Health Medical Group's primary care physicians.

Following a successful 6-month pilot at its Redmond, Washington medical center, Group Health began rolling out a secure online communication system to its 28 primary care clinics throughout Washington state and northern Idaho in May, 2001. This was followed by a statewide online prescription refill system in December, 2001. Completion of rollout to

Group Health Medical Group primary care teams occurred in April, 2002.

Evaluation

By July, 2002, approximately 2,600 adult patients had initiated a message to their health care team and a survey was conducted to determine patient perceptions and self-reported behaviors. Patient satisfaction data found from this survey will also be shown in this session. This study sent paper surveys to a random sample of secure messaging users, 612 of whom responded for a response rate of 51%.

The findings from this survey supported the notion that online services such as secure messaging and pharmacy refills are valuable tools from the patient perspective. A high proportion of patients using Group Health's secure online messaging system to communicate with their primary care team were satisfied with the system, would use it again for a similar issue over a "traditional" form of communication, would recommend the service to others, and are likely to stay with Group Health because of the online services.

Patient satisfaction levels indicated positive perceptions about this service, and more importantly, the self-reported behaviors showed that continued adoption of online services as a viable option for receiving health care was likely and that member retention could be impacted by these services.

Poster

Present functionality as well as upcoming functionality tied to an electronic medical record will be shown from the patient perspective, as well as from the practitioner perspective. There will also be a focus on steps taken to redesign the process of care to support a statewide health system that is available to patients whenever and wherever care is needed.